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The Black Cat

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They say the pen is mightier than the sword;
—And soldiers tin are tiresome things I think—
So I shall be a poet, but I'm glad
That **HAND SAPOLIO's**
mightier than the ink!

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The Black Cat

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Neighbor.*

BY KEENE ABBOTT.

THE deputy sheriff had come. Cautiously he opened the wooden gate as though he wanted to take some one by surprise. He did not allow the latch to click, but all the same, the rusted hinges creaked a dismal warning.

The officer would find no one at home; twice before this day his calls had been fruitless, and now, as formerly, a funereal silence wrapped the little weather-beaten house which seemed utterly deserted. And yet the existence which was hiding there could not wholly conceal itself. From the stub of brick chimney, above the sagging roof patched with tin and tar paper, bluish vapor was rising, very thin wisps of vapor as though the smoke were also trying to be invisible that it might not betray the master of the house into having a summons from the court of equity served upon him.

The visitor knocked, politely at first, then louder, then louder still, and his blows on the door resounded from the echoing emptiness within. At the back door the result was the same: no answer. But the deputy sheriff did not go away; he examined the hoe, rake and other garden tools leaning against the house wall, saw that fresh dirt adhered to the spade, and then began to look

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in at the windows. Green house plants on the sills with white lawn curtains behind them; geraniums red and pink glowing in the sunlight, and between the flower-pots, a gray cat asleep, with paws tucked lazily under his bewhiskered nose.

Surely some one must be at home. Again the man rapped, but still the house remained both deaf and dumb. Very well, he would wait. Utilizing the bottom side of a bushel basket for a seat, he resignedly began his watch, refilling his pipe as often as he smoked it out. A long, long time he sat there, and finally concluding that it might be well to see whether any one were hiding in the coal shed, he started away, striding through the garden where row on row of broad-leaved rhubarb spread its wealth of green to the brilliant sunshine. He was not careful how he went, and as he plodded diagonally through the rich, verdant growths, his feet were breaking down many a tender stalk, when suddenly he was commanded to halt. An excited voice, quavering and shrill, had penetrated the deep prevailing hush.

"Hey, you, stop! You're trompin' down my pieplant!"

The kitchen door had been jerked open, and a spare old man under a great straw hat, had come charging out into the garden, his thin, quivering face all one pucker of brown wrinkles, his sleeves rolled up above the elbows and his slim arms gesticulating like an automatic scarecrow.

So it came about that the deputy sheriff found opportunity at last to serve an order of the court upon Old Man Pieplant.

The following day the veteran gardener called at the office of the Martin Realty Company. Nearly every morning since they had first refused to accept the lease money he offered for his plot of ground, he had been coming here. Obstinate and patient, he had been repeatedly offering the sum of eight dollars, unfastening the dirty bit of string from about the squeezed mouth of a grimy shot-bag, counting out the change coin by coin, sighing because no one would pay any more attention to him, but still unwilling to believe that the acre patch where he lived had been sold and that he would no longer be permitted to stay there.

Sell the land? How could they do that, when he had been having the use of it these thirty years and more? It seemed almost to belong to him; he had lived there so long, and always he

had been punctual with his money. They could not find fault with him for that; he knew it.

Twice the situation had been explained to him. The city had been growing, spreading out, crowding in upon him. Formerly his acre plot of ground was almost waste land; now it was valuable. On one side of it a fashionable apartment house had been built; on the other side, a handsome residence, the home of the wealthy Mrs. Wilfred Carroll. Surely Old Man Pieplant could not expect to live there, in such a neighborhood, in that crazy, sag-roofed shanty of his.

"I could . . . maybe . . . fix it up a little," he faltered.

But no, that would not do. The land had been sold. He would have to go some place else to raise rhubarb for the market.

He did not believe it; he thought there was merely a question of wanting him to pay more money for the land, and he offered more, but the lease was not renewed.

Then he was seized with alarm. Perhaps, after all, the law was going to drive him out, and finally, when he realized this he was ill of it all night long.

The next day he was scarcely able to do the least bit of work in the garden. The bundles of pieplant he had gathered early in the morning were only withering in the sun, and realizing that he could not go to market, he lowered them in their basket deep into the well to keep them fresh.

Afterward he went into the house, locked himself in, and when some one knocked repeatedly and insistently at his doors he did not show himself. And yet, in the end, the notice of eviction had been served, and now that the old man saw how utterly impossible it was to get his lease renewed, there remained nothing for him to do but to employ a lawyer and then show in court that they had no right to drive him off his land.

But they did have a right; that was the trouble. The lawyer said so. He advised his client to move; that was it — get out! A dreadful shock! The old man stammered with choking protests.

Get out? He? Why — why, he would do nothing of the sort, never! Thirty years, more than thirty years he had been living there, and now get out! Well, say, how could he do that? Where

could he go? How would it be possible to earn a living, since pieplant, that single acre of pieplant, was all he had?

He sought counsel with other people, and their recommendation was the same as that of the lawyer: he must give up the land.

Well, then, maybe he could find some other place. But where? How, in his brittle old age, could he have the courage and the strength to begin all anew? The thought of it frightened him, shook him with a dread of his incompetency, assailed him with a sense of tremendous obstacles, and most of all, filled his mind with that grim and haunting spectre — the poorhouse!

Always he had shuddered to think of that, but now that it seemed the inevitable; now that he would no longer have opportunity of supporting himself with the labor of his hands he felt how dangerously near to him was that institution for the destitute, and he tried to resign himself to the notion of being a pauper, — a bitter thought, but perhaps, in the end, he might get used to it.

As he went scuffing homeward that day, lurching sadly along with the twisted handle of the large, earth-stained wicker basket hooked upon his arm, it seemed to him that he would never be able to reach the house, he was so strangely enfeebled, stiff, heavy and crippled in every muscle, as though his heart as well as his body had at last grown old, old, ever and ever so old.

Finally, at the end of his long walk, he reached the wooden gate and dejectedly dragged it open. As he did so his big gray cat came bounding toward him, came bounding with his usual feline daintiness and pliant ease over the green and even ridges of the broad-leafed rhubarb. With arching back the animal rubbed himself against his master's leg, purred continuous content, and with upraised tail waved a cordial welcome. Then, as the man laboriously stooped down, the household pet gracefully leaped to his shoulder, proudly perching up there under the brim of the wide straw hat that he might be carried on into the kitchen for his noonday allowance of milk.

"What a big, nice cat you have there!"

Those words, spoken by a well modulated contralto voice, were unexpectedly addressed to him by a woman in a fawn-colored

gown with a few fluffy lavender blossoms in her girdle. Quite like a scene on the stage, she had appeared from behind a flowering lilac bush, and the old man, being so taken by surprise, stammered uneasily

"A nice cat? Well, yes — yes, he is."

What should this woman be doing here? Some neighbor, perhaps, who had come for a bundle of pieplant. The old man waited for her to state her errand, and then, as she began to stroke the soft fur of the animal on his shoulder, he said to her:

"You would like a cat? — such a cat as this?"

"Oh, yes!" she replied with that complacency of tone suitable for humoring a child, but to her abashed astonishment the old man said:

"Well, you can have him."

The woman quickly withdrew her hand from the back of the purring animal.

"Yes," he added, "you take him. And see here, now, what tricks he will do." His basket, a thing of heavy wicker, polished on either side from rubbing against his body, he held at arm's length, and his pet leaped gracefully into it. He put the cat on the ground, made a hoop of his arms, and after a few moments of obstinate refusal, the animal lithely bounded through. "Take him," the old man repeated. "I give him up." He was holding his bent elbow toward her, with the cat upon it, and the woman twice cleared her voice before she contrived to say:

"Of course I should like the cat, but —"

The old man thought it was out of pity for him that she hesitated, and he made haste to add:

"That's all right; take him; you mustn't think about me." He was speaking with husky gentleness, and his hand went on stroking the animal's back. "I have to get along without him. Of course it's going to be hard, a little bit hard at first, but I will get used to it. For now, you see, now that I have found a good place for my cat, I won't have to worry about him."

"But why should you give him up?" the woman inquired, and the old man grew red, very red. He had so little blood in his body and all of it, apparently, had come running into his face.

"They are driving me . . . I mean, I am going away; that's it; I'm moving out. It isn't good to live so long in one place."

He swaggeringly spat aside to show that he did not mind it much, this moving out. But now, of a sudden, his expression changed, for the front gate had creaked open, and a person with a derby hat, a pudgy little man, was coming in.

Then two thin shoulders gave a shrug of contempt, and a thin old voice abruptly exclaimed:

"That Dutchman again! A landscape gardener he calls himself; he says the soil here needs a chemical fertilizer, but did you ever see such soil? Only look how everything grows! I make it that way."

A brown hand was proudly waved toward the green lines of pieplant drowsing in the sunlight, the white sunlight which was all a-quiver there. The garden was so slumberously hushed that with the slightest whiff of air the leaves gave forth a papery whisper.

The woman, after examining the ribbons of dark, rich earth which stretched to the end of the garden between the even rows of rhubarb, quietly observed:

"A rose arbor might flourish here, I should think."

And the old man replied:

"Yes, it would; anything would thrive in such ground as that."

At the approach of the man with the derby hat the woman inquired:

"Are you well acquainted with him, this landscape gardener?"

"He works up yonder." The old man jerked his thumb in the direction of a steep green terrace surmounted by a modern residence with wide, pillared verandas garlanded with honeysuckle. It was a red tiled house with several gables and a conservatory on one side whose arching roof of glass flamed in the sunlight like polished metal. "A widder lives there, alone, all alone in that great big place."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, and they tell me that she's bought this place, too, that old widder."

"Has she indeed?" the woman questioned with a self-conscious smile. "And is she so old?"

"I dunno; I guess so," he answered, and hostilely scrutinized the new arrival who had bared his head and was ceremoniously bowing.

With a slight nod which stirred the billowing lavender plumes of her hat, the woman greeted the pudgy gardener, and then said to him:

"Some other time will do for us to talk about the rose arbor. I shan't need you to-day."

Her words somewhat abashed the rotund visitor, who quickly consulted his watch.

"Am I late?" he asked.

"No, I think not, but that will be all for to-day."

The round, florid face of the heavy little man grinned with fat perplexity, but his employer, being a woman, was of course not to be understood. He therefore stammered a "good afternoon," and withdrew.

Meanwhile the old man was staring at the woman. He wiped his face on his sleeve, knocked off his hat and picked it up again.

"Well, well, to think of that!" he gasped. "You are the widder, you!"

"The *old* widder," said the woman, and in truth her hair was turning gray, but her face, the sad, calm face of one who rarely smiles, was unmarred by even the trace of a wrinkle.

"I was coming to see you," the old man added, "to see you about . . . to talk about the lilac bush yonder, and those trees. I set them out. In the big one, over there, that's where the children used to have their swing. Nobody must cut down those trees. You will see to that, won't you?"

"Children?" said the woman. "You have had children?" There was a certain wistfulness in her tone, and she spoke softly as though her voice were an echo from that great house up there on the terrace, that beautiful residence which was so full of fine things — and loneliness.

"I got their pictures in the album," said the old man. "And if you want to see them . . ." he hesitated, smiling shamefacedly

as he added: "Their ma always used to say that I bragged a tiresome lot on our boys, but she was awful proud of them, too, and bragged the same as me. And they *were* fine boys. They used to come home every Christmas time, but of course it made a difference when their ma was gone. They never forgot their old dad, though; no, ma'am, they didn't! Only . . . you see . . . one of them, you see . . . one of them went for a soldier, and the other one, Henry . . . well, I'm a-hungerin' yet and a-waitin' to hear what's become of Henry. 'Most every year I used to get a letter from him, but it's been five years, now — yes, ma'am, five years, two months and three days since I got my last letter from him."

"I should like to see a picture of your boys," said the woman.

Shortly afterward she was seated in a wooden rocking chair in the house of her neighbor. For over two years she had been living within a hundred yards of him, but to-day was the first time they had exchanged a word, and as often as she had looked down with offended eyes from her windows upon the patched roof of this ugly old shanty, she had never supposed that the interior of such a dwelling could be so neat, that the floor could be scrubbed so white, that the rag carpet and oval rugs of the front room and the chintz-covered furniture, with prim tidies upon the chairs and sofa, could have a charm so homely and quaintly picturesque.

And it was here that this old man had been living out his life, alone, utterly alone, but hopeful, doing his work bravely and patiently, complaining of nothing.

As he babbled garrulously of all the years he had been raising pieplant, of how he had built this house with his own hands and of what a great surprise it was for Mary when he brought home the first rocking chair, his visitor did not take her eyes from his face. And yet she was not listening to him; she was listening to the silence of her life in which that voice of his was only echoing. He talked of the sweet, commonplace, intimate things of existence, and she went on thinking of her own life and of what it had always been, that childless, loveless, barren life of hers, and its present emptiness, its meaningless social duties, its perfumed elegance and utter uselessness.

Between the lawn curtains, above the blossoming geraniums on

the sill, she was looking out through the open window at that residence up yonder on the smooth green terrace, *her* residence, designed by the city's most eminent architect, a place of tinted walls and softly harmonizing colors in which to house Oriental rugs, stately tapestries brought from Europe, rich brocades, furniture wrought by master craftsmen, lovely and costly trifles of every sort chosen by her ultra refinement of taste.

The old man was still talking, but suddenly she interrupted him. She looked into his faded eyes, and said brusquely, almost harshly:

"Stay here. I don't want you to go away."

"Don't? — don't go 'way? But I got to go. They say I must get out."

"Who says so?"

"Everybody." The old man, with a sweep of the hands, seemed to indicate the whole world.

The woman slowly closed the red plush album, snapped the big copper clasp, arose with a whispering rustle of her gown, and then said with quiet emphasis:

"The land is mine . . . No, yours — as long as you live it's yours."

The old man had a confused notion that he had not heard correctly, and he bent forward, with hand scooped about his ear, but of a sudden he recalled that this woman, and not the Martin Realty Company, was now the owner of that garden plot. Then, in his bewilderment of joy, he began to stammer:

"Sure nuff; it's your land. Yes, that's so. Only think of that! I plum forgot." With one hand squeezing his other hand he wistfully added: "You say . . . I'm to stay here?"

The woman had opened the door to go out, but she paused upon the threshold, surprised by the white splendor of sunshine asleep out there in the garden where drowsed the fresh-faced green of all the well-kept pieplant rows. She looked at them and then turned to look once more at the old man, and impulsively she stretched out her hand toward him.

"I want you for my neighbor," she said.

The Glass Eye.*

BY GEORGE ETHELBERT WALSH.

IT was a pale blue orb, but sometimes it lighted up with a fiery brilliancy that seemed to reflect the passionate nature of the wearer, and at such moments I stood in awe of Mendocha. He'd come out of the East through a blaze of mystery that made his personality of the greatest interest, and you could no more trust his veracity than the shifting gaze of his single eye. For Mendocha was a true son of the Orient — shrewd, crafty, taciturn, and a religious fatalist — but overlaying all was a thin veneer of Western civilization that was anything but a credit to the white man's teaching.

We picked him up at Port Said, but he was no more of that place than of New York or London. He was a cosmopolitan of the East, equally at home in Hong Kong, Manilla or any other port of the Far East. How many languages he could speak was purely a matter of speculation, but that he could think in and understand all was the astonishing part of his make-up. His polyglot was a combination that reflected wide association with many races and people; it was a universal language that made its possessor at home in any port of the Pacific or its adjacent seas.

Mendocha fell in dispute with the second mate on the third day out, and it all came from the pale blue orb which had the very annoying habit of staring with insolent contempt at any one addressing him. The dispute would have ended seriously for Mendocha had not a passenger, a small, swarthy Hindu, returning from England to his native country, suddenly intervened. The angry officer was swearing at the "insolent cur," and advancing threateningly with a glow of murder in his eyes.

"Hold, sahib! The man has a glass eye."

This was our first introduction to the man with a glass eye,

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and the irate mate stood stock still for a moment trying to adjust his senses to this new phase of the question. Then with an oath he dropped his doubled fist and said disrespectfully to Mendocha :

"If it's a glass eye take the damn thing away!"

Then recovering his good-nature he added by way of apology to the group of passengers:

"I thought the hound was trying to hypnotize me ! And it was only a glass eye!"

He laughed harshly, and seeing the Hindu he asked:

"How'd you know it wasn't his own eye?"

The turbaned Oriental shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"I had noticed it before, sahib."

Now the peculiar part of this incident, which escaped the notice of the others but attracted my attention, was that Mendocha overheard every word, and in one swift glance he cast the Hindu such a malevolent expression out of his one good eye that it made me shiver. The glass eye itself seemed to flame up with startling brilliancy in sympathy with its mate.

That apparently should have ended this trivial affair, and to most of the passengers and crew it did end there. But for that one glance of Mendocha's I should have forgotten it, too.

The next morning when the Hindu was found murdered in his stateroom, the excitement on the ship was intense. It was a cold-blooded murder, and without apparent cause or motive. Robbery was not the motive, for none of the possessions of the man were disturbed. The murderer had entered through the half open window of the stateroom and strangled the Hindu without attracting the attention of the occupants of the adjoining room.

The investigation which followed revealed no clew to the crime, and the excitement did not abate until we reached port, although every stateroom window was securely closed and fastened after that, even on the hottest night. I personally slept on the deck two nights to avoid the suffocation of a tightly closed stateroom, and others kept me company for the same reason.

Meanwhile, the thought of the malevolent glance which Mendocha had cast at the Hindu on the deck the day of the trouble constantly recurred to me. I could not dismiss it from mind. In my dreams I seemed to connect Mendocha with the murder, and in

broad daylight I could scarcely suppress a shudder when the owner of the glass eye passed me.

I was on the deck alone the night before the ship reached port. It was warm and quiet under the white moon of the almost tropical night, and the oily waters of the sea were emitting phosphorescent flashes of light that gave an uncanny aspect to the scene. My thoughts were of Mendocha, whom that day I had discovered watching me stealthily out of the corner of his single eye, and the remembrance of the Hindu's death after his interference with the officer brought an unpleasant association of ideas to my mind. Without admitting it, I was unconsciously connecting Mendocha with the murder.

I tried to shake off the depression which the thought occasioned, but I found myself powerless to do so. Mendocha's face glared at me out of the pale moonlight, and then I was gazing into the glass eye. I shook myself and tried to get up, acknowledging to myself that I was getting a very bad case of nerves over nothing. But if before I had been dreaming, I was positive now that I was confronted by a reality.

Dimly at first like the faint scintillation of a flash of white light, I was conscious of gazing at a fixed point not a dozen feet away from me. The ray of light was so brilliant that it made the moon beams pale in comparison. Then it grew in proportion and moved steadily toward me. Fascinated by the sight I could not move or speak.

I do not attempt to explain what subsequently happened, but relate it simply as I recall it. The ray of light increased in intensity until it seemed to bore through me. Then it drew so close that I tried to raise a hand to fend it off. It was dazzling in its brilliancy, and to my disordered imagination it seemed to portend evil. Once when it turned slightly the light of the moon struck it, and there was a flash of several rays which met at one point and then scattered in all directions of the horizon.

Suddenly I realized that I was gazing into a face that I had so often seen in my dreams. It was Mendocha's glass eye which had hypnotized me, and the fellow was approaching with the stealthy tread of a tiger. I tried to yell, to tumble off my seat, but all to no purpose. The fellow held me a prisoner, and I could

only gaze at the blue artificial orb which now seemed to blaze like a burning sun.

It was all a clear case of hypnotism, I believe, but the meaning of it I never ascertained, for of a sudden a couple walked around the side of the cabin and interrupted the seance. Mendocha disappeared as suddenly as he had come upon me, and for a time I could not regain sufficient strength to give the alarm.

Then I thought better of attracting attention to myself by reporting the circumstance. What evidence had I that Mendocha was connected with the murder, and what crime had he committed in approaching me in this strange way ? The more I thought of it the less I was inclined to speak of the matter.

But before we landed the next morning, I ascertained one thing which increased the mystery. Mendocha had disappeared over night, and was not on the ship.

For a period of several months I lost sight of Mendocha. Then I came upon him again in a rather unexpected and startling manner. On the docks at Hongkong one day I was amusing myself watching the loading of a steamer when a heavy bale of silk that was being lifted by a derrick slipped from its holdings and fell with a terrific crash to the wharf. The crash and rending of the heavy box startled every workman, but I was apparently the only one who saw the real nature of the whole accident.

The man in charge of the derrick had intentionally or inadvertently slipped the rope off the drum of the winch and caused the crash. Directly under the bale was a workman I had failed to recognize, but instantly that the mishap occurred I saw that it was Mendocha. Like a cat he had sprung to one side, and the bale struck the ground within a foot of where he had been standing.

With one swift inclusive sweep of the horizon, Mendocha had taken in the whole scene, and before any one could recover his breath he sprang at the man in charge of the derrick. There must have been something in the eyes of the wild beast that alarmed the derrick hand, for with a wild scream he plunged into the water and disappeared from sight. Mendocha followed.

The last I saw of the two they were engaged in a death struggle in the oily waters, and to my horrified eyes there came one upward glance of hatred and malevolence such

as I had seen Mendocha bestow upon the Hindu months before.

The body of the derrick hand was recovered, but Mendocha had disappeared for good. The whole affair only created a mild two days' excitement, and then it was forgotten. There were too many similar occurrences on the docks of Hongkong between the gangs of ship loaders for this one to be remembered long.

But I did not forget it. In that last dip beneath the waters, I had been marked for Mendocha's next victim. I could not cast this feeling off. In some way he had included me among his enemies, and the mystery of it was past my comprehension. I had been unfortunate in witnessing two of his escapades. If the man was mad this would be sufficient to impress my face indelibly upon his memory.

If urgent business had not kept me in the East, I should have taken the next steamer home. But I was unable to obey my inclinations, and remained on, but always with a feeling that I was doomed to some unexpected catastrophe. I watched for Mendocha in every crowd, and furtively looked for him in the alleys and by-ways whenever I was alone. It was an unpleasant condition of mind, and I was growing thin and nervous under the strain.

A mile outside of Hongkong there is a motley collection of old buildings occupied by the lowest class of natives. Near by is a temple dedicated to some ancestral deity whose chief good in life seems to have been that at a critical time he saved the country from a pestilence. Just how or why history does not say.

I had been called away on business and was returning late one night when I found myself passing through this disreputable place. The roads were muddy after a heavy storm, and traveling was slow and difficult. My coolies were tired out and sullen. When abreast of the old temple they suddenly performed a most remarkable thing for coolies. They stopped, dropped upon their knees, and then with a grunt of fear dashed away through the darkness, leaving me alone and much startled and bewildered.

Glancing around I saw a glimmering light twinkling near the temple. Then it disappeared and a moment later reappeared again. This time it had a strong steady glow that was unlike anything I had ever before witnessed. It was a white, cold, twinkling light, such as you might

expect to see reflected from a star on a biting wintry night.

It seemed to come from the apex of the deserted temple, and by the peculiar shadow cast by the building it had the appearance of a great eye placed in the center of the head of some uncouth, grinning giant. I shuddered at the sight. Superstition is strong when one is surrounded by a race who easily attributes supernatural powers to simple, ordinary phenomena.

I was standing stock still in the middle of the road where the coolies had deserted me, but the darkness protected me from any ludicrous exposure of my fearsome fright, although I was in no frame of mind to consider this or any other question of personal appearance. I must have been shielded from observation by the shadows of the old buildings, for as I stood, too frightened and dumbfoundered to run or call for help, there was a rushing sound near me and the splashing of mud and water by hurrying feet. I caught a glimpse of shadows crossing the muddy road.

They rolled past me and took shelter on the side nearest the deserted temple. Then suddenly there was an unearthly shriek, and the star-like light disappeared.

It was not courage or bravado, but rather the fact that I did not know where else to flee, that induced me to cross the muddy place and rush toward the temple. In a moment I was on the trail of running feet which pattered softly but distinctly on the soft earth.

They led me back of the temple and into a ramshackle building which at one time, I believe, had been occupied by one of the ancient priests. A dim light glowed there, and through the open doorway I witnessed a sight that made my blood run cold.

There was Mendocha gripping in powerful hands the throat of a swarthy-skinned Lascar. The two were rolling and heaving with the violence of their struggle. As I reached the doorway another of equal build, but clad in the rich garb of a Chinese merchant, circled around the two combatants and tried to find an advantagous point of attack.

Now much as I disliked Mendocha, and much as I dreaded his evil eye, I felt for an instant a strong impulse to rush to his assistance. He was no equal to two such men, although with either one alone he was fully able to protect himself.

While I hesitated the two combatants fell and rolled over on

the dirty earth floor. This seemed to give the third the opportunity which he was seeking. He plunged in and attacked Mendocha.

But his method of attack was as novel as it was repulsive. With both hands he reached for Mendocha's face, and then with brutal directness gouged out the glass eye which had so many times fascinated and alarmed me.

The loss of the eye aroused every latent instinct and power in Mendocha. He swung his adversary away from him for an instant, and with the free hand he drew something from his belt. There was a sharp report, and the escaping Chinaman stumbled, muttered a curse, and fell sprawling on the floor.

Even in that horrible moment of fright I saw the hand loosen its hold on the glass eye, and the blue orb fell with a tinkle on the floor and rolled away in the dirt. The two combatants forgot their quarrel and made a dash for the lost piece of glass.

They came together again and struggled and fought madly for its possession. They were two demons obsessed by some maniacal frenzy. They growled and bit like snapping dogs for the possession of that glass bauble.

Then crimson stains began to dye the earth, and the breathing of the two grew fainter and weaker. I saw then that they were using their short, sharp daggers to settle the conflict.

The tall Lascar suddenly relaxed his features and rolled over lifeless. Mendocha grasped the glass eye and with a gleam of triumph in his single eye gloated over his possession.

But it was a short-lived triumph. The film of death was already falling over his vision. In a desperate effort he tried to insert the eye in his head, but in his weakness and clumsiness he failed. A flash of light seemed to strike the orb and for an instant the room seemed illuminated by powerful rays of bright white light.

Then Mendocha fell over with a gasp, and the mysterious eye rolled from his hands to the floor. As it fell nearly at my feet it struck a stone and emitted a soft tinkle.

I stooped to pick it up, but to my gaze appeared the cold, cruel light which had seemed like the eye of the temple in the moonlight outside, and it mocked me. It was no glass bauble; but a diamond of brilliant hue and lustre. When I touched it some unseen hand snatched it from my grasp. I saw only the tapering fingers

and long, snake-like arm of the intruder, and then it was gone.

Months after this incident I hesitatingly related my strange experiences to an old Hindu student and scholar, who had made a close study of the mysterious ways of his people. When I was through, and asked for an explanation of the strange series of crimes and mysteries which I had witnessed, he said:

"It was undoubtedly the diamond eye of Junka, stolen from the temple of Pima. Mendocha must have been the renegade priest who desecrated the temple. The eye was a brilliant blue stone of great value, and was artfully tinted to resemble a human eye. It was placed in the middle of the head of Junka, and none save the priests could look upon it without being thrown into a death-like trance. It had power to protect the wearer, but it was an evil eye and brought misery and death to unbelievers."

"And Mendocha stole it for his own protection?" I asked.

"Yes, and for the reward he expected to receive for it. But he could never sell it. He was hounded from one country to another; he was never safe from attack; he was watched night and day. His wearing it in his own eye was a daring undertaking. He may have sought protection from his enemies in this way, for the eye was an evil one and could smite all beholders."

"But was he blind in one eye?"

The old Hindu scholar replied softly:

"No, but it was easy to exchange a common mortal eye for the eye of Junka. What man would not do it? And Mendocha had the chance, for he guarded the temple in lonely solitude for years."

"One more question," I pursued. "Why were men of different nationalities shadowing him — Hindu, Lascar, Chinaman?"

"They were all Hindus — believers — but disguised. And you — he may have taken you for one of them disguised as a European. That is why he marked you as his next victim. Yes, you were marked by the evil eye — and only Mendocha's death saved you."

A year later when traveling in India I heard that the lost eye of Junka had been restored; but when friends urged me to visit the temple and see it I pleaded off. I had no desire to fall under its hypnotic power again.

Flowers of Chance.*

BY J. ROWE WEBSTER.

AS the clock on the mantel chimed twelve, Nasmyth, the explorer, stooped and sniffed at the juncture of the doors to the cabinet which Professor Berensen, the botanist, had just locked. A faint, sweet, indescribable aroma reached his nostrils — an odor entirely distinct from the druggy, soporific mustiness, as of bad hay, which was exhaled from the dried plants in general, and with which everything in the botanist's library seemed so supersaturated that even books, when opened, reeked with it instead of with printer's ink. This odor was different.

"Impossible!" — muttered Nasmyth, raising his lank frame once more to the perpendicular, — "Impossible!"

He sniffed again.

Then he noticed, on top of the cabinet containing the choicest specimens of the Professor's herbarium, a brown paper portfolio like those which he had just been helping his host to put back on the shelves. At this moment Berensen himself, dignified and comfortably ponderous, reentered the room. He was carrying a large tray, covered with the means of satisfying rather more than seemed reasonable in a midnight appetite.

"The books can go anywhere; — my manuscript? — put it in that drawer; thank you."

When Nasmyth, with his characteristic aptitude, had made a redisposition of the piles of books and papers that had begun to tower toward the ceiling from one end of the heavy study-table, Professor Berensen carefully set the tray down on the place cleared for it. Then he said in his deep bass voice, with abysmal heartiness:

"I'm cavernously hungry, and thought you looked so, too."

"I was born with the look, they say," replied his guest, "but

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I fear that I can't help you out much. Feeding at night is for me one of the seven deadly sins;" — and his piercing gray eyes grew brighter as they caught sight of just what he most liked and had not partaken of for months.

"I have to eat a little about this time," complained Berensen, cheerfully. "I often sit up until two, occasionally until three;" — and he nodded toward the other end of the table, where the light of a powerful lamp was reflected in yellow gleams from the polished brass tubes and mountings of a magnificent binocular microscope.

Nasmyth could easily imagine him sitting there in his study through the long hours of the day and night — as imperturbable as a contented boulder in a secluded pasture. The explorer mused for a moment on the life so utterly different from his own seldom-interrupted activity, and then pointed to the portfolio on the cabinet:

"You overlooked that one; I don't think you showed it to me, either."

"I was reserving it," answered Berensen, — "Won't you take what you like, please?"

Nasmyth helped himself sparingly from the tray and sat down. Quickly satisfied, he began to grow impatient; for Berensen's ideas concerning the merits of his own hunger and thirst were much more munificent, and the tray suffered accordingly; had the forgotten portfolio been forgotten again?

At last, however, Berensen was appeased. "You may be aware," he remarked, "that what first aroused my real interest in you was that monograph on your South American discoveries. . . ."

"Yes, I know," broke in Nasmyth, with a quiet pretence of not interrupting, as he tried to side-track the Professor's oft-repeated and somewhat garrulous comments on the pamphlet mentioned, — "it was your kindly feeling for that monograph which first gave me the sympathy of various men as well-known as yourself. If it had not been for you I should never have been given the African outfit."

Dr. Berensen smiled: he liked to do a good deed, and also liked to be told of it.

"Your masterly report on the flora of the eastern slopes of Illampu, as I was about to remark, has enabled me to determine a recent acquisition, which I wish you also to identify."

The Professor took down the portfolio resting on the cabinet, and opened it carefully, full in the lamplight, on a little, low folding table between them. The explorer drew in his breath sharply; his ever tense face grew more tense still.

"Is not that *peruviensis*?" asked Berensen.

"It certainly is — though not, perhaps, the very best of specimens. However, I have not seen it for several years, and my memory may over-glorify it. How persistent its perfume is! It's like magic! Three little sniffs, and I am back in Bolivia! You have no idea how many associations I have with that plant — "

"You talk as if they were as sweet as first love," said the botanist, with the barest trace of sarcastic amusement; for Nasmyth had been the first to discover the plant, and his far-sighted eyes now appeared to be gazing at something very definite in a vista comprehended only by himself. Shortly, however, his intelligence busied itself once more with his immediate environment, and he asked:

"Who sent it?"

"I dug it up myself."

The explorer looked incredulous: "You have not been to South America during my absence!"

"No, indeed — I secured this only last August — not a month ago — in the White Mountains."

"What!"

"I told you the first of the evening that I had a little tale to tell later."

Nasmyth made no comment; he seemed absorbed, as if in a train of conjecture of which the unlikelihood startled him. Professor Berensen, though paying more attention to the third whiff of his cigar than to his guest's demeanor, nevertheless took a ready listener for granted. He adjusted himself once more in his easy chair, let his powerful head incline back against the cushion, and began:

"For years I have wanted a first-hand knowledge of all that

grows on the slopes of Mount Washington; and this summer I decided to poke into various nooks that I had never visited. About the last of July, accordingly, I packed up my things and bought a ticket to the Summit House. Once there, I procured a good guide, and started out on daily trips.

"At first I only went half-way down the mountain and up again — I am getting old and heavy, you know — but before long I was in fairly good condition, and made very creditable excursions. One day my guide, Hewitt, and I went over into a region south of what is known as the Boott Spur; and there, in the bottom of a rather uninteresting ravine, down the steep head of which I had climbed with some difficulty, I suddenly came upon the specimen before us. The surprise almost took my breath away — though I had been going down hill instead of up — a whole clump of it, blossoming and filling the air with its fragrance, as if North America suited it as well as South. Hewitt laughed at my delight. He was always offering me gems of thought in the realm botanical, and now averred that the plant which I had just found was very common in the mountains, and that his mother had often prescribed infusions of it with great success in severe cases of measles. I asked him if his home was in Bolivia; he answered: 'No; I live clear over in Randolph.'"

"Had the clump been set out there, where you found it?" asked Nasmyth; he seemed unaccountably disturbed.

"Just a moment; — I took my trowel and began digging round part of it. I remembered from your monograph that the roots were phenomenally long, but even then I was surprised. When I had been excavating for nearly half an hour, I could see Hewitt's indifference change to a well-veiled interest. However, I came to the sensible end of the roots at last, and was delving a little deeper, just to make sure of a perfect specimen, when my trowel struck something. I reached down into the hole, expecting to pull up a stone — and found — in my hand. . . ."

"Part of a woman's skeleton!" cried Nasmyth, rising from his seat; his face was marble.

"No!" exclaimed Berensen, after a pause, during which he gazed at his guest with unaccustomed wonder, "the bone belonged to the skeleton of a man; but how you could guess so . . ."

"Never mind my interruption, then — go on — go on, just as if I hadn't spoken!"

"I will try to — but really, you have somewhat disconcerted me; what can you — "

"Never mind, now — please go on!"

"Well, well — let me see — well, I said, 'Hewitt, there's the remains of a human being down there,' — and I handed the bone, a hip-socket, to him.

"Hewitt glanced up at the flank of the ravine, which there hung almost over us. Then he suggested, philosophically enough: 'Killed and buried by a slide.'

"I followed his eye; the fellow was right. We were directly in the path of a scar on the slope, a scar which, though not recent, was still plainly discernible; I was digging into a mound.

"'How long ago, Hewitt, do you think?'

"He examined the scar more critically, and finally gave as his verdict that the slide had taken place about three or four years back. Then he grew impatient and wanted to dig at once with an old snowshoe which somebody must have lost last winter — What? Oh, no, it couldn't have belonged with the remains I had discovered. — Hewitt, I say, wanted to dig up more bones at once; but I now had a moral right to the whole clump of plants, which of course had to be removed before we could dig much underneath. It would have been a botanical sacrilege to have cut off a single root. When at last Hewitt had a chance to begin, I helped with my trowel, and eventually we exhumed the complete skeleton of a rather tall man."

"You found nothing but the skeleton?"

"Not much else; we found his boots, a bunch of keys rusted almost into a nodule, a pocket knife, and the corroded remains of a japanned botanical-case, much like my own. That naturally made my interest keener. I have often wondered what he had in that case when the landslide came upon him. Of course he must have had some seeds of your lovely darling somewhere about his person — probably in his coat-pocket, as the roots went down near his hip."

"Perhaps, — but how in the world should he have happened to be carrying them? What did you do then?"

"To me it seemed best to leave the remains where they were, and build a stone cairn above them — the slopes of Mount Washington are covered with just such monuments. Hewitt said that we might carry them up to the hotel to await identification — that the death had obviously been accidental, and no coroner would bother us. But such a course seemed to me irregular, and besides, the idea of tying up the bones into a bundle with pieces of string was hardly edifying. We reinterred them, built a cairn of stones above, and went back to the Summit House with our story.

"Nobody there could give us anything definite in the way of a clue, though I was assured that every effort would be made to clear the matter up. Meanwhile I myself kept eyes and ears open; and before long, as chance would have it, I was the one to find the explanation of my own discovery."

Berensen paused to refresh himself anew. Nasmyth, who was hanging on every word, seemed strangely ill at ease, and kept an insistent silence which compelled the Professor to an almost immediate resumption of his narrative.

"About a week after the finding of the skeleton, Hewitt and I had been making an excursion into an entirely different region. Late in the afternoon we suddenly came out into a clearing — a lonely mountain-farm hidden away near a little stream at the base of the Presidential Range. The farm had been, in fact, our goal for an hour or more; we had gone slower than we had intended, and there was no hope of catching the last train up to the Summit House. I could not think of climbing up after my long tramp. And what a relief it was to reach that clearing! The woods had been hot and muggy; but we now stepped forth into a cool breeze that swooped down upon us from over the range — the kind of air that seems nutritious. On all sides rose the wooded slopes of the ridges; those to the west obscured in purple shadows, those to the east bathed in the gold of the late sunlight. I was ready enough to stop tramping.

"The owners of the farm, Hewitt told me, were a thrifty, middle-aged couple by the name of Dowler. Hewitt had not been near the place for a number of years; but he knew that they had always been in the habit of taking a few summer boarders, and did

not doubt that they could put us up for the night. As we walked across the meadow by the stream, and up to the trim little house, well-perched on a gently rising knoll, we came to large beds of flaming poppies. Then my eye was caught by some plants growing in a tall terra cotta umbrella-stand on the veranda. They were blossoming freely; and their strange, sweet perfume met us as we went up the front steps. Again I was face to face with your South American wonder, blooming in all its glory.

"'They're all ready for the measles here,' I said to Hewitt.

"At first he stared; then he grinned; he never afterward bothered me with quotations from the maternal pharmacopœia.

"Mrs. Dowler came to the door and let us in. She could easily put us up for the night, she said. This being settled, I asked her if she would kindly tell me how she happened to have the plants which were out on the veranda.

"'Oh, them's Miss Allen's; she grows 'em.'

"At that moment a little girl came running in from the kitchen, crying out that the bread was burning, and that she couldn't open the oven door. I was rather glad that the bread *was* burning; Yankee solecisms are not to my liking; but I hoped for better grammar from Miss Allen, and was not disappointed. I met her at supper — a clear-complexioned maiden lady, whose smile delightfully justified her Bostonian birth and education. After supper we sat about the open fire — for the mountain chill had begun to enter the house — and she told me what I was so anxious to hear. Then I told her my own story; and the upshot of it was that we each wrote out all that we knew independently of the other and then exchanged papers. I will now get hers."

The Professor went to his old mahogany desk, opened a little drawer in the top compartment, and took out a bundle of letter-sheets held together by an elastic band. Nasmyth's eyes followed his every motion.

"There!" said Berensen, as he took his seat again. "Now I shall not make mistakes. Here is what she has written:

"'HIDDEN VALLEY FARM, August 20, 189—.

"'At the request of Professor L. K. Berensen I am glad to write

down my vivid recollections of events which took place three years ago.

" ' Shortly after my own arrival here that summer — I came up as usual about the first of July — Mrs. Dowler told me that for fellow boarders I was to have a bridal couple — a florist and his wife, who were coming here from the West. I was somewhat apprehensively interested. I hoped that he would not be a fashionable florist — one who would want to make a lawn out of the meadow, trim the shrubs into parallelopipeds, and be dissatisfied with the wild flowers. After an evening of somewhat anxious conjecture, I decided that a fashionable florist would never think of coming to Hidden Valley Farm. I think that I was right; but Mr. Kronberg turned out to be a botanist! ' "

" Kronberg! " cried Nasmyth, breaking in upon Professor Berensen's reading.

" Yes, Kronberg — what's the matter? "

" I used to know him."

" He had the seeds from you, then! "

" No, not at all — go on — do go on! "

" I don't understand! Well, never mind for now, if you will tell me later.

" ' He was a tall, thin, alert fellow ' — (something like you, you see, Nasmyth) — ' with finely moulded features, clear dark eyes, and a strong chin. He was not German-born, but came from Indiana. His wife was simply lovely — as fair as he was dark, and graceful as a young white birch. They were a fine couple; but she, though apparently well, did not look so strong as one could have wished.

" ' They were very congenial to me — I only hope that I was to them! At any rate, I did all in my power, and gave them my very special map of the region to help them out on their excursions. She was as ardently interested in botany as he; and almost every pleasant day they would go off on a jaunt and come back laden with wild-flowers, many of which were such as I had never before seen. They used to sort them out after supper on the dining table, and were good enough to let me help to put them away in press. I learned a great deal — at least, I thought I did.

"'On rainy days, or when it was wet underfoot, the bride did not care to tramp — but she always insisted on her husband's going. He had been working indoors all the previous year, she said, and needed as much fresh air as possible. The idea that there was any serious risk in excursions among the mountains, especially in such solitary explorations as her husband went off on, could not seem to find a place in the head of either of them, try as anybody might to convince them. "All you have to do is to be careful," they said; but one cannot be adequately careful without adequate knowledge.

"'They had been at the farm for over a month, as serenely happy a couple as I have ever seen when the dreadful tragedy occurred. It was a "foul and fair" day. There had been heavy rains the night before, and great curling clouds of mist rolled over the mountains, leaving rags of white vapor hovering here and there above the tree-tops. Occasionally the sun would break through; occasionally it would drizzle! on the whole, however, it promised to become fair. Mr. Kronberg, on his many previous trips, had already secured most of the plants which he desired, but there were still a few varieties which he was anxious to obtain. He started out alone, waving to his wife until he had plunged into the woods. Half an hour later the sun came out — and he flashed a message to her with a small mirror from the top of the low ridge to the northeast of us. It was his habit to do so when he could. I used to watch for him from the window of my room, while his wife stood below on the side piazza, flashing an answer back to him. If the sky was overcast, they used to wave long white silk scarfs. They had a regular system of communication and frequently would talk for what seemed ages before saying good-bye the second time. Of course it wasn't eavesdropping when one didn't know what they said — and it was a pretty thing to see.

"'On this fateful day, shortly after Mr. Kronberg had disappeared over the crest, Mrs. Kronberg came up to my room —'"

"One moment, please," interrupted Nasmyth, "What was Mrs. Kronberg's maiden name?"

"I never asked," replied Professor Berensen; I do not know;

at any rate, if it was ever mentioned, I have forgotten. You think that you may have known her, as well?"

"I am almost certain — but perhaps not; go on, please."

"'On this fateful day, shortly after he had disappeared over the crest, Mrs. Kronberg came to my room, radiant as an angel in one of her dainty muslins. She held out to me a small silver box, with her initials inlaid in gold on the cover. "That contains," she said, "some seeds of a very wonderful South American flower which grows on the eastern slopes of the Andes in the neighborhood of Lake Titicaca. I made Mr. Kronberg take some of the seeds with him to-day, to plant them if he finds a really good place. I don't think he wanted to, but the idea happened to strike me. I don't see why it shouldn't grow outdoors in some secluded place. The only difficulty about growing it in the house is, that it has very long roots, and will not thrive in an ordinary flower-pot; but you could easily grow it in your umbrella-stand, if you do not object. I really think you wouldn't regret it — you simply have no idea what a wonderful thing it is! Now, would you like some seeds? — Oh, no, you can't have the box!"

"'I was glad to use the umbrella-stand as she suggested. If she had told me to put a seed in each of my tea-cups, and feed it on best orange-pekoe, I shouldn't have refused. Accordingly we filled the stand with loam in keeping with her suggestions, and planted the seeds with much ceremony.

"'It was the last time that I ever saw her happy; her husband that evening did not return.

"'I am so overcome as I write with my own emotions that I cannot dwell upon the heart-rending scenes which followed. She made the farm her home, and exhausted herself and her income in fruitless searches. All was in vain. She went into galloping consumption, and the next year died in my arms. At her own desire she was buried here on the crest of the northeast ridge, on the very spot where her husband bade her his last farewell; and I set out some of the beautiful plant on her grave, to the south of the little stone cairn which marks the spot and which is so built as to protect them. They blossom there well; but their

fragrance is not so sweet as the unforgettable fragrance of her own sweet soul.' "

Professor Berensen had smoked about half an inch of his cigar. He now threw the rest of it across the room into the fireplace: "What was that? — you are sure now that you knew her also?"

Nasmyth nodded; his face was shaded with his hand. At last he found his voice: "Kronberg was absolutely identified, then?"

"Absolutely."

"And she — she never knew that his death has been instantaneous — that he had not suffered! — Why hadn't he been found before?"

"Well, there was a pretty large district to cover. Besides, you see, his wife didn't realize how much farther he could go when she wasn't with him. The place where Hewitt and I found the remains was a good twenty miles from the farm. I had them taken up again, and reburied with simple services, next those of his wife. There are now two cairns on the crest, and two clumps of your flower. Really, I don't wonder that you are so fond of it; and as these two unfortunate people were acquaintances of yours, you will now have connected with it still further associations."

Nasmyth rose to his feet, and took a few steps around the room. As he came to a halt, Professor Berensen asked:

"Won't you tell me now what you yourself knew of Kronberg and his wife?"

Nasmyth began walking about again: "I met Kronberg some six years ago in California — saw a good deal of him. He was at work on the lupins, and had his hands full. He was a good fellow — I tried to persuade him to come down to South America with me, but he couldn't — no go. He hadn't — at least — no, I don't think he had — no, he couldn't have — "

"Couldn't have what?"

"He couldn't have met her before that time — it must have been afterwards — after I had come home from the Andes, and had left again for Mombasa. Have you a pathfinder? Don't bother — there is one in my suit-case."

The explorer left the room hurriedly. The white-haired botan-

ist closed his eyes, but made no other motion. His great head lay back on the chair-cushion in perfect repose. Suddenly his guest came back, pathfinder in hand.

"There's a train for the mountains to-morrow at nine A. M. Will you come up there with me, and show me the way to Hidden Valley Farm?"

Berensen opened his eyes: "To-morrow! — Up there! — yes, of course — I did not realize that you knew him so well."

"Him? — Oh, Kronberg — yes, I knew him pretty well; I didn't dream that she would ever meet him, still less that she ever would have cared for him — but poor chap, what a death! — and what torture unspeakable for her! Can't you see her, sleepless and wasting, wasting and sleepless — and racked with consumption! It would be more than I could bear, if she were not now at rest after it all — "

"You knew her very well, then?"

"Her! Why, God help me, sir, can't you understand! She was the one woman who could have made my life most worth the living!"

Berensen arose and put his hand on Nasymth's shoulder. "It pains me to learn that," he said, quietly; "I really don't see why she couldn't have married you instead of the other fellow — but these things are beyond us all."

"At one time she thought she might — though she never gave me any false hopes. We parted good friends — that was when I gave her the little box of seeds, hoping that she might see her way in time. I picked up the silver and gold myself that went into the making of that box; and it was my dream that she might wear some of the flowers on her wedding day. But Kronberg was a good fellow — she seems to have loved him."

"Of course she thought that you had met your death in Africa — that report was current for a long time."

Nasmyth was silent. Then he raised the portfolio reverently with both hands, and kissed the flat-pressed flower gummed to the mounting.

"To her memory," he said, simply.

"To her memory," echoed Berensen, deeply touched. Then his own memory awoke; "Miss Allen must be holding that lit-

tle box for you; Mrs. Kronberg, just before she died, put it into her keeping; but Miss Allen has not known what to do with it, for all that she could catch from the motion of the lips was the one syllable, *smyth,* and no suitable 'Smith' could be found. What a fool I was, not to guess! Would you give me a few of the seeds? — you never sent me any, you know!"

"I sent them all to her; you shall take what you like."

A few moments later, when Nasmyth had left the house, Professor Berensen returned to the mustiness of his library — the catacombs of so many thousands of mummied plants. "I don't believe," he muttered, as he took up the still open portfolio, "I don't believe that any other of my specimens has been touched by a man's lips — " he looked at the pressed plant more closely in the lamplight — "or been wet by a man's tears."

As he stood musing over it, the clock on the mantel chimed the hour of two.

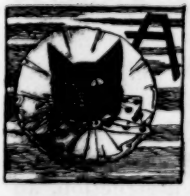
"And the train leaves at nine," — thought Berensen, "I must be going to bed."

Then he put away the portfolio and extinguished the lamps.

Mose Johnson's Funeral.*

BY ALEXANDER RICKETTS.

(This story appeared in THE BLACK CAT ten years ago and is reprinted by request.)



AS I sat on the porch talking desultorily with the landlord — the wide, roomy porch, with the wobbly, creaky, comfortable, splint-bottomed rocking-chairs, of the old tavern, not the "piazza" of the garish new hotel, which the younger generation point to pridefully as stamping with an outward and visible sign the village's evolution into a city — I happened to mention, I've forgotten exactly how it came into my mind, having seen General Grant's funeral.

"Humph!" observed the landlord, contemptuously. "You oughter've seen Mose Johnson's funeral if you wanter say you've seen a funeral. Eh, fellers?"

An appreciative chuckle circulated among the rest of the loungers, and spurred me into asking, "Why?"

"'Cause it was worth seein'," explained the landlord, scraping vigorously away with his jack-knife at the turnip with which he was refreshing himself.

"Whenever any of you out-of-town fellers comes 'round here braggin' about your gorgeous mortuary pageants, like them General Grant's obsequies you jest mentioned," he added, after thoughtfully selecting a new point of attack upon the turnip, "it don't fease us any. We jest nudge each other in an unassumin' way, an' say 'He oughter've seen Mose Johnson's funeral.' It was plenty of panoramer for simple country folks like us."

"What was it? How was it remarkable?" I asked, curiously.

"Oh, I dunno as it was anyways remarkable, except out here in the country. Mebbe you fellers that live in big cities are used to them," replied the landlord, cautiously.

"Well, let me hear about it, and I can tell better," I urged.

"Then, to begin at the beginnin'," began the landlord, clearing,

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reluctantly apparently, for action by depositing the turnip, with his knife stuck upright in it, on the porch railing, "it was all on account of an ord'nance we've got here providin' that there sha'n't be any parades unless the Mayor gives a permit for it. Last year when the circus struck town we had a cross-grained, crabbed old feller for Mayor, an' when the circus man went to get a permit for his parade he got turned down.

"'I want a permit to parade,' says the circus man.

"'You can't have it,' says the Mayor.

"'I'd like to know why I can't,' says the circus man.

"''Cause circuses are demoralizin' an' indecent inventions of the devil for to lead the young an' unwary onter destruction, an' consequently I don't approve of them,' says the Mayor.

"'Nothin' of the kind,' says the circus man. 'I'll have you know that mine is a great moral and instructin' show, that'll benefit an' uplift any community, an' especial any old moth-eaten fossil like you.'

"So the two of them had it back an' forth, hot an' heavy. The circus man beggin', an' the Mayor refusin' ; the circus man threatenin', an' the Mayor defyin' him ; the circus man pleadin', an' the Mayor sittin' obstinate ; the circus man gettin' madder an' madder, an' the Mayor not budgin' an inch ; the circus man cussin', an' the Mayor finin' him seventy-five cents per cuss — until the upshot of it all was that the circus man had to leave without the permit, but swearin' he'd parade in spite of all the mayors an' permits in creation, while the Mayor was vowin' he shouldn't, if he had to call out the militia to stop him.

"Well, mister circus man came down here an' carried on somethin' awful, worse than the wildest wild man from Borneo you ever seen, an' offerin' everythin' to everybody if they'd only tell him how he could outwit the Mayor, an' jest then I had sorter an idear. So I says to him, 'Say,' I says, 'Mose Johnson's lyin' dead this minit, waitin' for the poor board to bury him, Mose always bein' a shiftless, thoughtless, no-'count kind of a feller.'

"'I wish it was the Mayor,' snaps Mr. Circus. 'What of it ?'

"'Well,' I says, 'I dunno as there's any ord'nance regulatin' funerals, or permits got to be got for the same. Do I get that contract for feedin' the animals ?' I says.

"'You do,' says the circus man, his face lighting up like a transparency. 'Set 'em up for the house, an' then come and show me where Johnson's abode is.'

"At first the disconsolate widder stood out for a full suit of mournin' — dress, shoes, stockin's, bonnet, veil, an' all the fixin's — but finally she compromised on a crape veil an' a pass to the show an' a seat on the band-wagon.

"Accordin', right on the time advertised, along down the street past the Mayor's office came a hearse, with Johnson reposin' peacefully in it, an' the circus follerin' in all its glory, with the red an' gold glitterin', an' the elephants trumpetin', an' the lions roarin', an' the hyenas laughin', an' the rest of the menagerie howlin' an' gruntin' an' growlin' an' carryin' on, each in his particular style, an' the band playin' sometimes a funeral march to jig time an' sometimes 'A Hot Time in the Old Town' to funeral march time, an' the horses prancin', an' the ladies smirkin', an' the chariots rumblin', an' the clowns grinnin', an' the men smilin', an' the steam pianner tootlin' hymn tunes with variations, an' the circus man a-straddlin' a dancin' piebald stallion, lookin' proud an' serene an' happy.

"My socks, wasn't it the Mayor's turn to be mad! He came rushin' out of his office like a crazy man on the loose, an' catchin' hold of the bridles of the horses pullin' the hearse, shoved them right spang back on their haunches.

"'What's the meanin' of this here?' shouted the circus man, ridin' up, pretendin' to be terribly shocked. 'What do you mean by interferin' in this outrageous way with my old friend Mr. Johnson's funeral, you old grave-robber you?'

"'Wha-at?' gasps the Mayor.

"'I'll have you know that we're performin' our sad duty of attendin' our late lamented friend's remains to their last restin' place, you irreverent old body snatcher. Ain't we, Mrs. Johnson?' says the circus man, pleasant as a basket of chips.

"'Yes, you be,' chirps the forlorn widder, from where she was munchin' peanuts an' popcorn beside the bass-drum in the band-wagon.

"Well, sir, the Mayor was pig-headed about some things, but he realized instanter that he didn't have no authority to stop a fun-

eral in full career. So all he could do was grind his teeth, an' froth considerable at the mouth, an' hope somethin'd turn up that'd give him a chance at that circus man while that parade follered Johnson all over town. An' they didn't shirk Johnson none either, but finally went ahead an' planted him to the tune of 'Where Was Moses When the Light Went Out?' There was the biggest crowd at that funeral that ever attended such a melancholy event in this town.

"An' that's why," concluded the landlord, resuming his knife and turnip, "we're claimin' that the last sad rites paid to Mose Johnson's ashes were somethin' new an' unique in the way of obsequies, at least in this here neighborhood."

The Canine Love of Travers.*

BY F. BOYD VAN ALLEN.

RS. T. JUDSON CARR was not a wicked woman. She had her good qualities and oftentimes their predominating influence cleared her character from any haze of irrectitude. She was a wealthy specimen of the mushroom genera, her husband, in the twenty-five years of their yoked existence, having risen from a small clerkship to the position of controlling partner in a large manufacturing firm. In such circumstances she maintained the household par excellence in the little village of Crossley, and became at the same time the dominant strain in the matronly chorus of the village societies.

Because she went about with Cecil Travers was no criterion from which to judge evilly. Travers was nothing but a boy, in his teens yet, while Mrs. Carr was passing on toward the half century age post.

She was indiscreet. Even her husband, big, bluff, happy T. J. Carr, admitted that. He rather liked it. It gave a touch of superiority to convention that gratified his rancor toward society. For T. Judson despised all the functions and formalities of fashionable people.

He hadn't been used to it for thirty years. When he broke in at last, largely through the maneuvers of his wife, it seemed too late to learn new tricks. Mrs. T. J. grasped them, however. She liked society, especially young people. She liked the male sex, especially Travers.

The boy came from an aristocratic family, and after the usual pampered life, he was sent to Yalard College at Crossley.

His acquaintance with Mrs. Carr dated from a garden party at the Brice's. He never analyzed his liking for her, such is

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not a young man's way, but he plunged into a series of social eruptions at her heels and the town talked.

The woman was very attractive and she liked a man's homage. More seasoned men read her character easily, but Cecil was unsophisticated to a degree. She led him on, with what motive the Grundians failed to say, though the general opinion prevailed that it was for no good to the boy.

Mrs. Carr loved her husband. Business kept him away for weeks at a time. The woman had to be amused; Travers pleased her. Travers got the post. Such was the logic of her friends.

The rare days had come and the gardens at High Crest, the Carr place, were a galaxy of roses, the various shades and hues meeting in a riot of color about an artistic sun-dial. A woman half reclined against its marble base, the soft turf affording a cool couch for the graceful form.

It was evening and she awaited some one. Her face was pensive, yet the line of resolution about the chin seemed newborn and of a sturdy character. Her husband had just left her to be gone a month. She had let him go without emotion, the excitement of a great love in her heart. She had wanted Judson to get away quickly; now that he was gone she almost wished him back. The line of resolution paled.

A step on the gravel! The line came back, its imprint deeper than before.

"Cecil," her voice was caressing, "I knew that you would come."

His beardless face, foreshadowed with a coming manliness, brightened.

"Didn't I promise?"

"Yes." She arose as he held out his hand. No pressure was there. This youth was but a youth and the divine spark had not, as yet, touched his heart.

They sat upon a bench close by.

"Mr. Carr has just left for Chicago." She pronounced the words heavily.

Travers looked away. "Gone for long?"

"A month or more. Business, business, how it takes a man's time. They get so wrapped up in it, they never think of

wife or children. Carr has never had any children," her voice was soft, almost reverent, "to care for and he might look after me a little bit more."

"Do you need it?" innocently.

"Every woman does. We haven't the strength of men. Sometimes — "

He laughed. "That depends upon what kind of strength you mean. Now as far as moral power is concerned— " Poor boy, he had been craming Ethics for "exam" and was prepared to wax eloquent, but she interrupted.

"That's just it. Moral strength, moral courage. I do things that I know are wrong, then obliterate the memory of them in excuses. That's cowardly."

"You're no coward." He said it unexpectedly — to both.

She looked at him suddenly and smiled. "What a dear boy you are!"

He blushed a little. Was it embarrassment or did he notice a deeper tone, a warmer note, almost of passion in the woman's voice?

"Look at me," she went on. "Do you think I am happy?"

Travers stumbled. "Er — er — yes."

"Well, I'm not. My husband leaves me. Do I know how he passes his time? Why shouldn't I — " she stopped.

Her voice was beginning to take a queer hold on Travers. He noticed that two pearly drops were forming in the corner of her eyes.

Her eyes! For the first time he began to take notice of her features specifically. A strange thrill went through him. He had never noticed the long lashes before, the beautiful curve of the eyebrows, the regularity of her profile. With a suddenness it all came to him.

Unconsciously he slid his hand toward hers. And she grasped it cruelly.

"I'm sorry," he said, and he felt his voice coming deeper than ever before — a man's voice.

"Of course, you could not know how lonely it has been for me." She passed a web of lace before her eyes.

"Selfish one that I am, I never thought, I — "

"No, no, you have done so much for me. What happy days we have passed together. Since you came into my life I've been happier, but I've had longings."

"And I," he bent forward, eagerly. Intuitively words came. Was the passion of some long dead ancestor incarnate in him?

"Longings that I could not explain," he went on. "Not pains, not aches, but — I can't describe them. It's the way I felt toward my mother and yet different."

"You felt toward your mother? Is she dead?"

"She died when I was six. I remember her though I scarcely knew her."

Mrs. Carr grasped his other hand. "That feeling toward your mother — was — "

"Yes?" He leaned so close that his lips almost brushed her hair.

"— love."

They did touch it. Her lids were lowered, but she knew.

"Could — could you — love — "

He was on his knees at her feet in a moment.

"Eleanor, Eleanor, I love you, I love you. What a blind fool I've been! Seeing you every day and not knowing. How suddenly it comes, doesn't it?"

His words still rang with a deep manly intonation.

She raised him to her side and their lips met.

"I love you," he repeated. "You are unhappy here, your husband is a brute. Come let us go away, I'll never forsake you. College closes to-morrow. I'm ready to leave in the morning. Hurry, pack a few clothes and we can go to-night." Excitement caused the words to pour forth.

She scarcely heard. The sudden joy of his acknowledged love had put her in a realm of happiness. As the meaning of his last words came to her, she drew herself up and pulled her hands from his.

"Your husband need never know," he was insisting. "We can go to South America. I have property there at Guayquil when I am of age. We can be happy anywhere."

She arose quickly, sobs shaking her bosom.

"Oh, Cecil, you have spoiled it all — all. For days in secret I've planned this scene — to surprise my husband when he returned. I wanted to adopt you — to be a mother to you." She walked away.

He was stunned.

She had awakened the Man in him. Primal instincts were dictating the thoughts of his brain.

"Mother," he scoffed.

She turned.

"I love and honor my husband above all men. As a boy I loved you with that maternal instinct which craves for the companionship of youth. But now you are not a boy — I can see. I did it unmeaningly." She clutched at the marble balustrade. "You are a man now; you must go."

He turned away.

"Cecil." Softly she whispered. He did not stop.

"Cecil," louder as he reached the corner of the house.

"Cecil," she shouted, but he turned from sight and fled over the lawn into the twilight shadows.

Spoons.*

BY ANNA SAUNDERS FIELDER.

A WILSON regarded the sack of flour with silent contempt.

Pa Wilson shuffled uneasily.

"Well, Ma," he said, "I tried to git Kingsbury's Rocky Mountain Best, but Jed wuz clean out, and knowin' as how you hed to hev flour, Jed says as this is jest as good."

"Jest as good! Powerful lot Jed Summers knows about flour! It's a purty howdy-do! Me with them cakes to bake fer the Ladies' Aid, an' not a teacupful of decent flour in the house! No, 'tain't no use fer you to try to change it now, them cakes oughter be in this minute! I'll hev ter use it. Like as not they'll fail an' I ain't had a failure with my bakin' in twenty year. Lucindy! Come here an' empty this sack of flour while I git the eggs an' milk."

Lucindy, a shambling country girl, appeared in the door as Ma's ample proportions disappeared pantryward.

"Oh, Ma!" came in excited accents a minute later, "look what's in the flour!"

"Lord!" ejaculated Ma, dropping an egg on the spotless floor. "A silver spoon! Pa, look here!"

"Well, don't that beat all!" Pa took the shining object in his great paw almost reverently. "Jed said as how they wuz premiums in some of the sacks, but I low he didn't know it wuz anything like this er he'd never sold — "

"Don't you tell him, Si!" gasped Ma. "I'm goin' ter make a flat failure out'n these cakes so's they won't nobody else buy that flour. I'm goin' ter git all of these here spoons Jed's got. I wonder how often they come."

"Oh, once in so often, I reckon. Won't Billy's eyes stick out

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when he sees this? Well, I got ter go an' put up the hoss."

"Lucindy," said Ma, confidentially, when Pa was out of sight, "I'm goin' to git half a dozen of them spoons. I've always wanted some real silver an' this is my chance. I reckon I'll take a fall out'n them stuck-up Higginses with their silver butter dish that the platin's all wearin' off."

That night, instead of her customary knitting, Ma Wilson got out some scraps of flannel and made a long case containing six pockets.

"Now, what would you embroider on it?" she inquired of Lucindy, "Spoons?"

"Silver sounds a heap sweller," Lucindy replied.

"No," Ma objected. "Silver is misleadin'. Knives an' forks is silver; so's Higginses' butter dish. I think I'll make it 'Silver Spoons.'"

And "Silver Spoons" it was when the case was reverently placed under Ma's pillow that night.

In the two months following Ma contrived to use four sacks of flour and was rewarded with two more spoons, and her soul soared heavenward as she slipped the third spoon into its pocket and realized that the case was half full. Her thrifty soul would not permit her to waste the flour and she was driven to distraction thinking of ways to use it fast enough. The family lived on cakes and pies, thickened gravies and flour sauces until Bill remarked that he "wished she'd give him his flour dry if it would rush things any."

Three months passed and brought the fourth spoon. With it Ma begun to develop a fear of burglars. Her sleep came to be mere cat-naps, from which she frequently aroused to call Pa and send him down to see if he had fastened the cellar door. A night of unbroken rest was an unknown luxury to the long-suffering family.

The fifth spoon only served to make matters worse. Ma's old hand trembled piteously as she slipped it into the shining row.

"Seems like she gits worse'n worse," Billy growled.

"Never mind!" consoled Pa. "Praise be! They ain't but one more!"

And it was this thought that goaded Ma on. She doubled her

efforts and tripled her vigilance, but the sixth spoon came not.

Weeks passed, leaden weeks of flour puddings and thickened gravies, and nights of sleepless anxiety. Pa grew sullen and Ma's rotund figure shrunk to gaunt proportions. She gazed at Pa hollow-eyed across the breakfast table. Flour, flour everywhere! Flour in every imaginable shape and form.

The climax came when she fainted one afternoon, opening a sack of flour.

The doctor came, and tapped and sounded in vain.

"As near as I can make out," he said to Lucindy, "It's a kind of nervous prostration. Has your Ma been under any great strain lately?"

Lucindy shook her head. She didn't want to tell about the spoons and the doctor went away mystified. As the weeks passed and Ma grew weaker his mystification increased. She commanded each new sack of flour to be brought to her bed and opened, and at each new disappointment she sank back in a condition of collapse. During the intervals she lay weak and silent on her pillow, slipping the spoons in and out of their pockets, and regarding sadly the one empty space.

"Bill," said Pa, one day. "Something's got ter be done er you'r Ma 'll die. I'm goin' ter hitch up an' drive over to Grayson City an' buy one of them spoons at the jewelry store.

That night he drove back triumphant and handed a spoon to Lucindy, saying:

"Now, you sew that up in a sack of flour an' praise be! we'll be shed er this spoon business forever!"

"Why, Pa!" Lucindy exclaimed, "this ain't like the other!"

Pa's face fell. "Well, it looked like it in the jewelry store. Well —" he gazed around helplessly.

"Ours has got little curly-cues here," Lucindy explained, "an' this one ain't."

"D' you suppose she'll notice?" Pa inquired, hopefully.

"Notice? Ain't she looked at them spoons enough to know 'em in the dark. No, it ain't no use. We got ter git it out'n the flour er not at all."

Meanwhile Ma had spent the day making her will, one clause of which afforded her honest pride —

"And the family silver consisting of ——— spoons I bequeath to my daughter Lucindy, for a wedding gift."

She had insisted on leaving the blank space. "For somehow," she said, "I feel 's if I couldn't die till I see them six spoons all together there in a row, an' the number can be written in at the last minute."

When Pa read it he set his jaw firmly and strode out to the barn. "Bill," he ordered, "hitch up. I'm goin' down an' buy every sack of that blamed flour Jed Summers's got!"

An hour later they drove into the yard with the wagon full of sacks. Feverishly they worked opening and pouring the contents unceremoniously on the barn floor, the dust from the same turning them gradually to a ghastly gray in the lantern light, until they seized the last sack, tore it open, dumped it on the heap, and then gazed at one another in blank despair.

At last Bill broke the silence. "My God!" he gasped, gazing wild-eyed at the snowy mountain. "Think of the flour we've got to eat!"

"I'm goin' back down to Jed's," Pa Wilson said, dully. "Maybe he's got a sack left som'ers."

Jed invited them to look for themselves and in desperation they looked. At last, under a heap of empty sacks in a dark corner they found a solitary sack left.

"Bill," the old man groaned. "You do it — I ain't got the grit."

Bill hesitated a moment, glanced at the old man's haggard face, drew a long breath, then plunged in his hand and brought out — a spoon!

It was a gasping breathless pair that dashed into the farmhouse kitchen a little later. Would they be in time? They tore through the dining-room and into the bedroom where Ma Wilson lay weak and white among the pillows, still counting her spoons.

Bill tossed the shining new spoon on the counterpane before her. She started up from the pillows her face radiant with awe and unbelief.

"It ain't — " she whispered. "Oh, Pa, it ain't the other spoon!"

"Sure, Mike!" Bill ejaculated. "That's just what it is, the other spoon!"

Ma Wilson turned it over, lovingly examining every detail of the design, all the little "curly-cues" which proclaimed it unmistakably *the* spoon, then slipping it into the solitary empty pocket she fell back upon the pillows and contemplated the finished row with satisfaction too deep for words.

The assembled family gazed from Ma's placid face to the spoons and from the spoons to one another, limp and silent with voiceless gratitude.

At last Ma spoke.

"You can tear up that will, Lucindy," she said, "I'm goin' to live to git a dozen of these here spoons!"

The Bells of Fate.*

BY CHARLOTTE CANTY.

CHIQUITA, the little burro belonging to the American doctor, had wandered away from the spot where the doctor had left her. He had sprung from her back with a force that set all her silver bells a-jangle, as he hastened into the garden, where a crowd of women sobbed and clung about the dead body of Magdalena. The loveliest of the village girls lay with her dagger thrust into her cloud-white breast.

Nothing of this Chiquita knew, but she knew the trail over the mountain, for only three days ago she had covered it, carrying the doctor from the big city to the quaint Spanish town in the deep valley. Back over the trail she started, stepping lightly and softly, so softly that only the very rough bits of the road called forth the tinkling music of her bells.

But Valencio, crouching beneath the mesquite bushes on the hillside above the house, knew all of the tragedy and more. He had waited, hoping that there might be some mistake; that Magdalena might have struck a blow less true than she threatened. But there was no mistake; Magdalena was dead; past the shame of having been tricked by him, played with to rouse the jealousy of the woman he preferred. And his coward's heart trembled as he listened to the broken voices from below, for the cry of the moment was, "Who is to tell Luis?"

Luis would come in from the Rancho de los Cerritos at sunset to spend his Sunday with Magdalena. One Sunday out of each month he came, and it was since his last visit that all of this mischief had been done. Valencio, his narrow face working, cursed Luis and himself and the whimsical Tonia, at whose fickle heels he had danced these two years past. But for her

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coldness he would not have dreamed of setting up this flirtation; and surely he would not have selected Magdalena if he had thought of Luis. For Luis was bold and fearless, and Valencio was a coward. And Luis was coming — even now he might be riding into the town!

Valencio crept up the hillside, keeping under the shade of the bushes, but hastening to get out of earshot of the crying voices below. Luis could crush him — break him in two — and Valencio knew that he would do it. He must get away and at once. Not to any of the big ranchos, for no one would take him in now. The mountain trail was his only hope; once across the divide he might feel himself safe, but nowhere on this side of the mountains would there be refuge for him.

Fear lashed him into swift action; the lazy length of his body responded to the new appeal, and at sunset he found himself high on a mountain peak, looking down into deep shaded canyons where the night lay in wait. Faint, tear-white stars were trembling in the sky, but Valencio saw only the shadows, creeping slowly up the mountainside.

He could not stop for the night; night or day Luis was sure to follow him. Again he cursed the luck that had led him past Magdalena's garden gate the night that it had pleased Tonia to give her smiles to a wandering musician. He had gone blindly down the road, nursing his sullen jealousy, until at Magdalena's gate he had heard a silver-toned laugh, gay and sweet, tinkling like — God! What was that?

Valencio stood, trembling in every cowardly fibre. A silver tinkle, resounding among the rocks, had seemed so near that he could have sworn that Magdalena herself had laughed. But Magdalena was dead — lying back there with the life gone out of her torn white breast.

He cast one terrified glance behind; the road was clear. The sound had seemed to come from a point just ahead of him, where the trail wound up over a heap of ragged rocks. In burning haste he pressed on, the chill of the shock changed to a fever of terror. He must get away, down into the wide world beyond the mountains; the wide world that all his life he had been too lazy to desire.

Too lazy. It was this that had made him fix upon Magdalena as an easy prize. She was pretty, prettier far than any of the others, and so young that she knew no better than to glory in her conquest of him. To have wrested him away from the more assured charms of the older woman had seemed to her a triumph indeed. And when Tonia had passed them chatting at the garden gate Magdalena had laughed for very joy — had laughed like — like —

Again Valencio paused, shaken, trembling, clinging to a thorny shrub for support. Again that silver tinkle had rung out, and was echoing faintly and sweetly in the vast silence of the mountain heights. He sank weakly down to the earth. What devil's magic was this? No one was near; no one could be; and yet that sound was like nothing else in the world but Magdalena's laugh, that care-free music bubbling up from the pure depths of her happy heart. But her heart was stilled; never more would laughter well up from it, as it had on the nights that he had sat in her garden and had sung to her the songs that he had made for Tonia. Dead — the child Magdalena — the child who had grown woman before his eyes. He hurried on, pushing aside the scene that rose before him.

What was it he had said to her about not being able to remain? What excuse had he made? He could not recall his words; he knew only that Tonia had beckoned him back, and that he was going to her. Magdalena, with all her child-woman's witcheries, could not hold him. And Magdalena, stung to the soul, had realized that he had only played with her to win back Tonia's uncertain fancy. He could see now what he had been too dull to read in the girl's pallid, tragic face; the shame of having been made an instrument for his vanity; the self-contempt that pronounced her wholly unworthy of Luis; the certainty that Tonia would laugh now and that the whole village would laugh with her.

Valencio had followed her as she turned from him to run into the garden; he had seen the knife in her hand, had heard her despairing threat; but even as she spoke he had listened for the laugh that should tell him that her threat was but a jest; that he

might return, care-free, to his first love. He had listened for the laugh — for the laugh —

Horror seized him and held him rigid. The laugh was ringing all about him, echoing back from rock to rock, tinkling, trembling, taking a hundred new inflections, but always with that silver quality that had been its charm. He lifted his hands to his head to shut out the sound, but he could hear it ringing into his brain; the laugh of Magdalena, the child laugh that had been the chief grace of her young womanhood.

An Indian legend dimly came back to him; the story of a man who had been pursued by the dying whispers of the woman he had murdered. Was this to be his punishment — to be pursued by the laugh that he had killed?

The wild pounding of his heart stopped him. He had been running, sobbing breathlessly in terror of a phantom that ran with him. Spent and exhausted he went down, only to be urged up and on again by the silver tinkle that came to him, now near, now far, but always with the blithe ring that he knew. Overhead the tranquil stars gleamed, and the young moon glided through the velvet sky, but he saw only the shadows that the moonlight cast, and trembling, ran from them.

He had forgotten Luis. Beating in upon his brain the silver tones mocked all thought of human vengeance as they mocked all pity for human weariness. Torn by the thorny brush, bruised by many falls on the rough, stony trail, he would yet have counted himself blest if he could have a moment's respite from the incessant tinkle of that phantom laugh. The stars paled and the moon went down. In the blacker darkness he stumbled along, and always the silver laugh kept pace with him.

"Magdalena!" he cried, aloud. "By the pity of Christ!"

"Magdalena!" came back the echo, interwoven with silver tones, "By the pity — " and then the laugh, more clear, more metallic than ever.

"Magdalena, I die!" he gasped, desperately.

"Die!" rang back the echo, and though he was sobbing aloud he could hear the tinkle that came with the response.

Then in a frenzy of madness he, too, laughed, and the silver tones blended with his as they had on nights too well remem-

bered. He sang, and Magdalena's silver notes paid tribute to the crazy tones as they had to his more artful music. Madly he stumbled along, crying, singing, shouting wildly, and laughing in a crazy hysteria, but the silver laugh was with his every echo and his haste did not outrun it.

Suddenly he stumbled, fell, and plunged into a gully. Crying with fatigue he pulled himself up to the trail again, and in the faint light of dawn he looked over a steep precipice, a scar in the rock face of the mountain. But even as he looked the silver laughter came nearer; sounded at his very shoulder. With a mad shriek he plunged down the precipice into the rock heap at the foot of the mountain scar.

There was a faint, answering cry of fear, and half a dozen stones slid down from the trail as Chiquita, her silver bells jangling, paused at the edge of the precipice, and looked with mild eyes at the shapeless heap below.

At the Café of the Nightingale.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

FOR a week Hassan Ali Khan had wandered about Ispahan looking for an individual. He was in no haste, not at all. Believing firmly in Kismet, he knew very well that he would come face to face with the object of his search, when Fate ordained they should meet. That was why he took his vapor bath leisurely every day, and lingered over the dyeing of his beard and nails with henna juice. That was why he merely strolled through the long tunnel of the main bazaar, illuminated at intervals by circular holes in the vaulted roof, through which shafts of sunlight fell upon the press and tumult of green robed lordly mullahs, swashbuckling Afghans, gray-bearded merchants, closely veiled women, except perchance for the flashing glance from eyes that look at you as if from the depth of a mystery unfathomable, water carriers, camels, pack mules, dogs, and street urchins, all jostling and apparently hurling nothing but anathema at each other. Similarly in threading the narrow twisting mud walled lanes he passed on without acceleration of his slow dignified pace, but nevertheless keeping his gaze keenly searching ahead for the man he intended to meet when Allah so willed.

Not that there was anything to be said when these two men confronted each other. It was merely a case of which would be the most alert to kill without word of warning or argument. For that purpose Hassan Ali concealed beneath his long robe a beautifully chased but extremely supple blade, and one hand was seldom far from the hilt. A flash of steel, a muttered curse, and the disgrace that was upon him would be washed from his honor. Nothing else would suffice.

By chance he had seen his wife drop a white rose in leaving one

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of the stalls of the main bazaar, and a young man had stooped to gain possession of what his actions clearly proclaimed to be a treasure. Hassan Ali was at first rooted to the spot with wrathful astonishment. Before he could fully grasp the situation to seize or strike down the offender, the other had disappeared in the throng. But not before the other had left upon Hassan Ali's mind a sufficiently clear impression of identification when they should meet again. Of this Hassan Ali said nothing to his wife. He preferred the more subtle Oriental way of disclosing his knowledge of the affair by handing her the rose, which he did not doubt he would find upon the young man, together with some tangible proof of his punishment. Her manner would prove her innocence or guilt. That his wife might have dropped the flower unintentionally was hardly any mitigation of the other man's offense, according to Hassan Ali's standard of ethics. Where it is a crime to look upon a veiled woman, a man must take the consequences who displays emotion over a flower which has fallen from her hand. Thus he wandered through the sun-bathed streets of Ispahan, with the clear turquoise sky overhead, and simple murder in his heart.

In this way Hassan Ali came to the open door of the Café of the Nightingale. On the threshold he paused to listen to the concluding verses of the Persian epic of the Shah Namah, recited evidently by one of poetic talent. As the voice sank into the last stanza, he entered a room which would hardly bear any resemblance to a café in other parts of the world. Around three sides of the room ran a stone bench, the fourth side being open to the refreshing prospect of a flower garden. In the centre was a pool of clear water, and suspended above the pool was the cage of the feathered songster that had endowed the café with a reputation second to none in Ispahan. What a star of the grand opera is to other nations this particular nightingale was to the people of the City of Roses. A comparatively fabulous price had been paid for her carefully trained natural gift, and to the café bearing her name resorted the appreciative critics of Ispahan. In the meantime the other cafés were searching high and low for a nightingale to stem the flow of patronage toward their fortunate rival. At the moment of Hassan Ali's entrance

the cage was covered with a veil of rich but light material, and seated on the benches were men of swarthy hawk-like features, perfect gentlemen in the manner of cutting a throat, each one of them. Kalyan (water pipe) and coffee were being served, and the young reciter was salaaming his acknowledgment to the grunts of approval bestowed upon his performance. As Hassan Ali moved forward he glanced at the young reciter, and recognized in him the offender of the rose. By no sign did he display the jealous anger seething within, but quietly took a seat on the stone bench, ordering kalyan and coffee. It was against the rule of society to execute vengeance in such a gathering, where weapons if not enmity were presumed to be temporarily laid aside. So Hassan Ali watchfully sipped his coffee and smoked his kalyan, while conversation became general among the other guests.

Presently the young man leaned over the pool and withdrew the cover from the nightingale's cage. The little bird hopped about on her perch, and ruffled her modest plumage. A hush fell upon the lips of the hawk-like faces, all eyes were slowly turned upon the cage. Then softly, like the richest tone of emerald velvet, her voice rose in expanding cadences. Higher and higher the little songster carried her notes into magic trills, until all space seemed filled with the power of her melody. In the eyes of the vulture-like men, sitting as bronze effigies, fountains tossed liquid gems and sprays of violets into the air, the wine of Shiraz sparkled in crystal goblets to hand, and fair women moved before them in gardens of delight. Then the bird came down from the heights to sing in a minor key, and a strain of sadness floated through the atmosphere. The sky shaded from rose into purple, glistening domes and minarets sank into shadow, the high pitched cry of the mullah proclaimed the One Immortal Principle. Turbaned heads bent lower, and natures that never flinched from bloodshed, torch, and rapine, were touched with a rarely experienced sympathetic emotion. Hassan Ali was almost prompted to mercy, if not forgiveness. Presently the voice of the bird ceased, and her tribute came in that deepest applause which cannot find utterance. In silence. Only a muttered word here and there.

"Mashallah! Wonderful!"

At last the man at Hassan Ali's side lifted his head and addressed the young reciter.

"Boy," he said, "when thou hast tasted of love, then wilt thou come to sing of it like the bird."

The young man flushed with wounded pride. He impatiently drew from within his outer garment a withered rose, and leaning over the pool, fastened it in the bars of the nightingale's cage.

"Let her then sing of the hopeless love which fills my heart," he cried.

Hassan Ali's hand sought his dagger hilt as he started to rise.

"Be still, Brother," enjoined his neighbor, with a firm grip of restraint. "Listen now to the bulbul singing to the rose."

Again the nightingale enchanted her audience, so that at the conclusion of her song the copper bowl passed around was willingly half filled with coins. Only Hassan Ali refused a contribution, sitting with a scowl as if he would like to wring the bird's neck. When the young man set his foot outside the café, he would pay for his presumption as well as his insult.

In a little the young man took his rose from the cage, and Hassan Ali's neighbor again spoke.

"Boy, since thy love has been so well proclaimed, it is but fair we should know thy heartless charmer's name."

Hassan Ali's hand impulsively clutched his dagger. If a certain name passed the young man's lips then convention would burn up in fury.

"That is well spoken," cried several voices. "Boy, give us thy charmer's name."

With head bent the young man hesitated. Then he looked up quickly.

"Zobeida," he simply answered.

"Zobeida," echoed the others. "That is a good name. May Allah yet give her into thy possession."

"Zobeida," muttered Hassan Ali with astonishment, for that was his daughter's name. "Boy, didst thou say, Zobeida?" he questioned.

"Zobeida," the young man repeated. "She is the daughter of Hassan Ali Khan, whom may God protect."

Hassan Ali sat lost in wonder for some moments. He then

rose, and touching the young man lightly on the shoulder, drew him out into the miniature garden.

"Boy," he said, when they were secure from interruption, "I have a question to ask. Answer truly for thine own sake."

The young man met Hassan Ali's stern look fearlessly.

"Thou didst pluck that rose from the pavement of the main bazaar, when it had fallen from a woman's hand. Her name was not Zobeida. See to it that thou dost not lie in this matter."

"By Allah! I will speak the truth," cried the young man. "It came so in this way. Some time ago I passed by a palanquin in the Royal Square. The curtains were drawn aside, and I caught a Heaven sent glimpse of a lovely face within. I was smitten with love for her, and followed the palanquin until it passed in at the gate of Hassan Ali Khan's house. Then I waited until I was able to speak with one of the servants. From him I learned the name of her upon whom my love was set. I begged him to intercede with Zobeida's mother, and at last he consented. Many times he brought word that Zobeida's mother would not listen to my suit, that Hassan Ali Khan was too proud a man to give his daughter to a wandering poet. Then I told of my love in verse, which I bribed the servant to give to Zobeida. Finally the servant brought word that if a red rose fell from the hand of Zobeida's mother in the bazaar I might aspire to happiness, if a white one I must relinquish hope. Thou seest, O Stranger, it was a white rose. For me now what is there but death?"

"Boy," said Hassan Ali, laying his hand gently on the other's shoulder, "never wilt thou be nearer death, and escape the snuffing out of life's uncertain flame, than thou hast been in the last few moments. But thy plea has been well sung. Owe thy good fortune to the nightingale. Come! thou shalt see thy Zobeida."